

Request for Expressions of Interest

RiverMills at Chicopee Falls A Redevelopment Opportunity

*Chicopee, Massachusetts
April 4, 2011*



*City of Chicopee
Mayor Michael D. Bissonnette*

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RiverMills at Chicopee Falls
A Redevelopment Opportunity
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The City of Chicopee plans to issue an official Request for Proposals (RFP) soliciting development submissions for the RiverMills site in late summer 2011.

To express interest and/or be included on an e-mail listing for project updates, to be notified of the RFP release date or to receive a copy of the formal RFP please contact the above-listed individuals.

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I. Project Summary

The City of Chicopee is seeking expressions of interest from development teams regarding the acquisition and redevelopment of the RiverMills properties within the City's Chicopee Falls neighborhood. Comprising approximately 65 acres of contiguous property along the Chicopee River, Rivermills is composed of two former industrial properties, the Uniroyal Tire Complex and the Facemate Corporation, and is the largest Brownfields redevelopment project currently underway within the City. The City will entertain proposals that address either a portion of the site or the site in its entirety.

Through an open and public bid process, pursuant to Massachusetts laws, the City of Chicopee will be seeking bids and proposals from developers.

A. Background

Chicopee Falls

As one of three original villages that would eventually be incorporated into the Town and later the City of Chicopee, Chicopee Falls has been instrumental in the City's historic development. As one of the oldest neighborhoods within the City today, Chicopee Falls is an economically diverse neighborhood. It includes low to moderate income residences, office, commercial, light industrial and public service properties (including police & fire services, a District Court and U.S. post office). The neighborhood is home to the Church Street Historic District, the Edward Bellamy House and the Chicopee Historical Society.

Industrial development began in Chicopee Falls by the early 1800's. In 1822, the Boston Associates realized the value of the Chicopee River's natural falls and purchased water/land rights in Chicopee Falls for mill construction. The group realized that the area held much potential and revised plans to include four (4) Lowell System mills. The Boston Associates are also responsible for the development of mill complexes in Waltham, Holyoke and Lowell, Massachusetts.

Chicopee Falls become known as Factory Village with housing constructed for the immigrant workforce. Factory Village would lay claim to a number of achievements including:

- The production of the first American car by Stevens-Duryea; and
- One of America's largest rubber companies; Fisk Tire would produce 5,000 tires daily; and
- The home of Edward Bellamy, a famed Utopian whose hometown experiences informed the writing of *Looking Backwards* and *Equality*.

At the height of production, Chicopee Falls and the other industrial areas of Chicopee employed some 7,000 area residents. By the end of World War II, contracts dwindled and so too did Factory Village. Fisk Tire (the site now known as Uniroyal, Inc.) ceased operations in 1980.

The site of the Lowell Mills was sold to Johnson & Johnson before being purchased by Facemate Corporation, which would go bankrupt in 2003.

Located in the heart of the Chicopee Falls neighborhood, the RiverMills site represents one of the largest contiguous areas of former industrial properties in Massachusetts and thus is well-poised for redevelopment.

The Site

The RiverMills site is approximately 65 acres of property along a bend in the Chicopee River. The site is bound to the west and north by the Chicopee River, to the east by private commercial parcels, Oak, Grove and West Main Streets and to the south by Front Street. Additionally, the river side of the site is bound by levees and a concrete flood wall system constructed during the 1950's by the Army Corps of Engineers, in response to occasional flooding. The topography of the site varies. There is a 40-50 foot elevation change from Grove Street to the river side of the site. The elevation change along Oak Street is approximately 25 feet. A more detailed topographic survey of the site is available on the project webpage.

The site is located along a bend in the Chicopee River, a resource identified as under-utilized by city residents. The site also benefits from its proximity to:

- Road frontage along Front, Grove, Oak and West Main Streets;
- Service by utilities as described below;
- Direct access to Route 33 (Memorial Drive) which is the City's commercial corridor and access to the Massachusetts Turnpike (Exit 5);
- Access to Interstates 291, 391 and 91;
- Neighboring parcels that are for sale and offer the possibility of site assembly.

By April of 2010, the City owned the entire RiverMills site. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has designated this site as part of the Brownfields Support Team Initiative. As a state-designated Brownfields Priority Project, demolition and cleanup have been ongoing since 2010. The City is aggressively taking steps to construct a state-of-the art, Older Adult Community Center expected to open in late 2012.

B. Project Description

Chicopee Falls offers an exciting opportunity for an innovative development firm to create a signature mixed-use project on the banks of the Chicopee River. By bearing a substantial portion of the costs associated with the reuse of this historic property, the City of Chicopee in collaboration with MassDevelopment has created a remarkable redevelopment opportunity. Unlike other comparable sites, many of the costly and lengthy procedures required to prepare the site for redevelopment have been completed or are underway, reducing the risk and uncertainty typically associated with brownfield redevelopment.

In 2010, the City initiated a master planning process that resulted in the development of two redevelopment visions for the entire RiverMills site. The city plans to utilize the current site visions as ‘flexible’ frameworks to which interested development teams can refer when formulating their plans for the redevelopment of site. The City anticipates that proposed development schemes may vary from these visions.

C. Former Facemate Property

1. Location: 5 West Main Street, Chicopee, MA 01020
2. The former Facemate Corporation property totals approximately 20.2 acres and was originally developed during the early 1800s for the manufacture of textiles. Between 1823 and 1915 the site was owned by the Chicopee Manufacturing Company which produced and processed cotton cloth. The property was bought by Johnson & Johnson in 1915, who continued similar production activities. In 1977, the property was purchased by the Facemate Corporation, which produced finished cotton and synthetic cloths. Facemate Corporation was forced to shut down in 2003 due to bankruptcy and foreclosure proceedings. The property has remained vacant since 2003. The City took title to the Facemate parcels in 2010.

BETA Group, Inc., an environmental consultant has been retained by the City to provide Licensed Site Professional (LSP) services and to investigate environmental conditions at the property. Soil analyses indicate the presence of SVOCs, EPH, PAH and metal exceedances of the applicable reportable concentrations at several locations most associated with former transformer areas and rail beds. Further environmental information for the former Facemate property is available on the project webpage.

Additionally, six (6) structures remain on the property in various states of decay. The City is completing site remediation and demolition activities.

Approximately six (6) acres will be retained by the City for construction of the state-of-the-art, Older Adult Community Center.

D. Former Uniroyal Property

1. 154 Grove Street, Chicopee, MA 01020
2. The former Uniroyal Tire property consists of approximately 28 acres of land, originally developed during the late 1800s. In 1870 the property was used as a lumber yard by the Chicopee Manufacturing Company. From 1896 to 1898 the property was owned by the Spaulding and Pepper Company, who manufactured bicycle tires. The Fisk Rubber Company, which later changed its name to United States Rubber Company and then to Uniroyal, Inc., manufactured bicycle, automobile and truck tires and adhesives from 1898 to 1981. Uniroyal, Inc. closed their plant in 1980 and sold the property to the Facemate Corporation in 1981. Facemate leased portions of the Uniroyal buildings to various companies for manufacturing, printing, machine shops, office, storage and health care facilities. Following a demolition project during the summer of 2010, where six (6) buildings were demolished by the City, eleven (11) vacant buildings remain at the Site.

Michelin North America, Inc. (MNA) which acquired the assets of Uniroyal, Inc. is considered the primary responsible party (PRP) dealing with residual contamination at the Uniroyal property. As the City's partner, MNA has been conducting response actions on site of a number of years. MNA's environmental consultant GZA GeoEnvironmental, Inc. (GZA) of Springfield, Massachusetts has established eleven (11) 'exposure units' to distinguish areas of environmental control.

One (1) Release Tracking Number (RTN) is currently active at the site (1-0436), which has been linked to other RTN's. All known underground storage tanks (USTs) have been removed and all transformers have been drained and removed from the site.

The excavation and off-site management of contaminated surface soil have been completed at several locations. PCB-impacted soil was consolidated and temporarily relocated between existing buildings under a cap. It is likely that this PCB-impacted soil consolidation area will be relocated to the basement of an existing building following demolition.

Supplemental Phase II Investigations have recently been completed by MNA. Completed activities include supplemental soil sampling under the demolished Buildings 1-6 (heavy metals, VOCs, etc.) and a supplemental assessment/risk characterization of sediment in the Chicopee River. An

electronic database containing most environmental documents is available to prospective developers for review. A more in-depth environmental summary is also available on the project's webpage.

A Phase III evaluation of remedial alternatives at each exposure unit is currently being prepared by MNA. Groundwater remediation activities are ongoing at specific exposure units while plans to address PCB-impacted sediments in the drainage and toe drain systems are anticipated to be conducted in the spring of 2011. In addition, rails and ties located along existing rail beds are planned to be removed by the Iron Horse Preservation Society during March 2011.

MNA's anticipated future response actions include the disconnection of building drains, supplemental assessment of surface and subsurface soils and groundwater assessment. Future actions also involve an investigation of source areas within buildings including floor drains, trenches, underground product lines, etc.

II. Site Utilities

A. Cable Television

- Charter Communications
- Website: <http://www.charter.com>

B. Electric

- Chicopee Electric Light Department (CEL)
- Website: <http://www.celd.com>

C. Natural Gas

- Columbia Gas of Massachusetts
- Website: <http://www.columbiagasma.com>

D. Stormwater/Drainage

- Chicopee Water Pollution Control
- Webpage: <http://chicopeema.gov/page.php?id=92>

E. Telecommunications

- Verizon
- Website: <http://www22.verizon.com>

F. **Wastewater**

- Chicopee Water Pollution Control
- Webpage: <http://chicopeema.gov/page.php?id=92>

G. **Water**

- Chicopee Water Department
- Webpage: <http://chicopeema.gov/page.php?id=90>

III. **Project Vision**

RiverMills serves as a vibrant reminder of Chicopee’s industrial heritage. City officials and residents alike have repeatedly underscored the importance of developing the RiverMills properties as the avenue through which the City’s heritage can be preserved. It is hoped that through redevelopment the site can once again be a part of the community it helped establish.

With this in mind the city has established the following vision to guide redevelopment of the RiverMills site:

“The City of Chicopee envisions the creation of a mixed-use, energy conscious, walkable community integrated within the historic framework of Chicopee Falls. With expanded business and job opportunities and new living options for residents, redevelopment will re-connect the neighborhood to its rich environmental context while re-forging links between Chicopee Falls and Chicopee Center...”

- *RiverMills Development Brochure*

- **Mixed Use Redevelopment:** The City is interested in redevelopment schemes that provide a diverse mix of uses on the site. This mix should preferably include complementary uses that will directly and indirectly enhance the area as a place to live, work, shop, dine, visit and as a place to connect with recreational and environmental amenities. Schemes should provide for high quality improvements with uses that will actively contribute to the economy of the City, provide public access where appropriate and add to the neighborhood’s vitality and tax base.
- **Site Legacy:** The City has a vested interest in preserving the site’s history as part of the redevelopment process. It is hoped that redevelopment schemes will address how the site’s industrial past can be incorporated into its reuse, remembering the site’s history.

The following structures are proposed for possible re-use:

- Facemate Building C, a rectangular brick warehouse building consisting of two (2) levels. Dimensions are 146 feet by 38 feet with a finished space of approximately 11,000 square feet.
 - Facemate Building 5 Stair Tower, a four (4) story brick structure adjoined to the front of Building 5 with overall dimensions of 26 feet square and an approximate 80 foot height. It includes a partially below-grade basement and a belfry level on the top floor. Access to the tower structure can be made on the first floor entrance. The tower is envisioned as a public ‘outlook’ structure within the redevelopment visions.
 - Uniroyal Administration Building (Building 26), a seven (7) story brick structure with overall dimensions of 200 feet by 46 feet. The building has a finished space of approximately 65,000 square feet. The building includes a partially below-grade basement with low ceilings that steps up to grade in the rear. The first floor is slightly elevated relative to street level and is accommodated by a wide entrance stair and canopy.
 - Uniroyal Building 25, a one story brick structure is currently occupied by a tenant. The building has a footprint of approximately 100 feet by 58 feet.
- ***Environmental Connections:*** Development schemes should strive to surround proposed buildings with a series of green spaces linked with pedestrian walkways, greenways or trails that also take advantage of the Chicopee River Walk that is currently under development. The entire RiverMills development should strive to be a pedestrian friendly environment, while enhancing the Chicopee River. Redevelopment schemes should propose avenues through which the river can be accessed and utilized from RiverMills by the public.
 - ***Neighborhood Connections:*** The RiverMills property has been inaccessible to the Chicopee Falls neighborhood for nearly thirty (30) years. Redevelopment schemes should propose avenues through which the site will be reintegrated into the surrounding neighborhood and enable new connections to Chicopee Center and Memorial Drive’s commercial corridor.

- **Green Development:** The City of Chicopee supports sustainable development practices and plans to pursue LEED certification for the City's new Older Adult Community Center. The use of 'green' development techniques, with respect to energy efficiency, materials, building systems, construction methods, long-term building operations and site planning will be key factors considered during the developer selection and bid process.
- **Effective Public-Private Partnership:** With City, state and federal agency investments of nearly three (3) million dollars to date, redevelopment schemes should not place disproportionate requirements on City resources.

IV. Development Context

A. Chicopee Governance

The City of Chicopee is governed by an elected Mayor and a City Council composed of thirteen (13) Councilors: one for each of the City's nine (9) wards and four (4) at-large members. Currently, the Mayor and Councilors are elected to two-year terms. Other elected positions include the City Clerk, Collector, Treasurer and Assessors. The City Council is the main legislative body of the City.

The Chicopee's elected School Committee is composed of thirteen (13) committee members: one from each of the City's nine (9) wards and four (4) at-large members. The Mayor is the chairperson of the School Committee, charged with the governance of the City's school system overseeing three (3) high schools, two (2) middle schools, ten (10) elementary schools and one early childhood center. The school system currently enrolls approximately 7,800 students.

B. Chicopee Tax Structure

Chicopee's taxation environment has been excellent. Since FY 2007-2008, the Mayor and City Council have voted to raise less money through taxes than the statutory levy limit allows. The FY 2011 Residential Property Tax Rate is \$14.66 per \$1000 of assessed valuation while the FY 2011 Commercial Property Tax Rate is \$30.30 per \$1000 of assessed valuation.

V. Investment and Incentives

The project site has been and continues to be, the focus of concentrated capital investment on the part of Federal and State agencies, and the City, including:

- \$1.4 million in Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) funds;
- \$900,000 through MassDevelopment’s Brownfields Redevelopment Fund.

The City’s Office of Community Development has and will provide full-time oversight of the redevelopment, demolition, remediation and planning efforts.

Other investments include environmental assessment and ongoing remediation work being undertaken by Michelin North America, Inc., who is considered a partner at the Uniroyal property.

Local incentives may include:

- Tax Increment Financing (TIF)
- Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)
- Fast-track Permitting

State incentives may include:

- MassDevelopment Brownfields Priority Project
 - The site’s “priority project” designation makes it eligible for an additional \$1.1 million in Brownfields Redevelopment funds.
- Brownfield Support Team Project
- Brownfields Redevelopment Access to Capital Program (BRAC)
- MassWorks Infrastructure Program
- Commonwealth Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP)

For additional information please visit the RiverMills webpage, which can be accessed through the City of Chicopee’s website: <http://www.chicopeema.gov>.